

## **PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

**Contact:** Pamela Felice  
[pfelice@safeminds.org](mailto:pfelice@safeminds.org)  
404-934-0777

### **Autism - CDC Avoids The Elephant in The Room**

Atlanta, GA – A [study](#) released Friday by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that autism prevalence has increased a staggering 57% from the 1994 rate of 1 in 150 to 1 in 110 for children born in 1998. SafeMinds is extremely dissatisfied with CDC's lack of commitment to researching environmental causes and the timing of their announcement.

Mark Blaxill, SafeMinds Director told [FoxNews.com](#), "I would say that releasing something the Friday before Christmas is about as deep as you can bury something."

CDC's Catherine Rice said, "We know there are multiple complex genetic and environmental factors which result in multiple forms of autism and we have much to learn about the causes." However, absent from [CDC's press conference](#) and subsequent call with autism advocacy groups were specifics on the types of environmental exposures to be investigated. They skirted questions about potential environmental causes and avoided using words like "toxic exposures" or "pollutants" despite very pointed questions from advocates.

During CDC's statement, Rice referenced CDC's [SEED study](#) "to help identify risks and protective factors for ASDs and other developmental disabilities. SEED is studying potential risk factors that may be related to genes, health conditions and other factors that affected the mother's pregnancy and the child's first few years of life." Yet SEED's website doesn't mention environmental research.

Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) chairman, Dr. Tom Insel, took a new tone in an interview with journalist David Kirby. According to [Kirby's article](#), Insel said that better diagnosis and reporting could not "explain away this huge increase," and that "there is no question that there has got to be an environmental component here." Insel also stated, "It's quite believable to me that there are many children who develop autism in the context of having severe gut pathology, of having autoimmune problems, of having lots of other problems. And some of these kids really do recover."

SafeMinds President, Theresa Wrangham said, "To date, IACC has paid lip service to environmental research by noting its promise and chronic state of underfunding. Yet the IACC purposefully excluded environmental expertise from informing their research agenda. Most recently, the NIH missed a critical opportunity to equalize this acknowledged funding disparity. Of the stimulus funds NIH allocated for autism research, cause and prevention was allocated 52% with over 70% of that amount dedicated to more genetic research that is already well funded publicly and privately."

Neither CDC nor IACC have shown a sense of urgency or commitment to study environmental triggers such as the many toxins and pollutants infants and toddlers are exposed to (including from vaccines). SafeMinds wants journalists to ask tough questions. With such a dramatic

increase in prevalence, the public deserves to know which environmental triggers will be investigated to explain the ghastly increase. Visit [SafeMinds website](#) for insights on what changed in the environment between 1994 and 1998.

###